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CHARLESTON, S.C. NEWS & COURIER		
M - 61,168		
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MAY 13 1966		

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CIA Under Fire

For months a quiet little war has been waged against the U. S. Central Intelligence Agency, which provides the President with secret information and conducts other operations.

The campaign started earlier this year with an article by Joseph Kraft, a syndicated Washington columnist. Mr. Kraft strongly suggested that Vice Adm. William F. Raborn, USN (Ret.) was unfit to be director of the CIA. We dissented at the time.

Suddenly the little war isn't quiet any more. Esquire Magazine has several articles about the CIA in its current issue. The New York Times is giving front page treatment to a series on the CIA written by a team of reporters.

The public may wonder what lies behind this criticism. To be sure, the agency is good copy. If a writer makes an error in describing a James Bond type secret operation, the agency will not denounce him for his mistake. The CIA does not reply directly to public attacks.

It would be unfortunate, we believe, if the campaign against the CIA were to snowball. A close watch is in order for any agency

that does not have to account publicly for money and operations. Watchdogs are on the job. Sen. Richard B. Russell (D-Ga.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, is the principal congressional figure concerned with the CIA. We have confidence in his abilities and integrity. The President has two committees to deal with CIA operations. One keeps tabs on current activities. The

other maintains broader supervision.

Proposals have been made for additional supervision. They do not strike us as valid. A great nation must engage in a variety of secret activities to ensure its survival. Access to knowledge of secret operations should be on a "need to know" basis. It would be better to abolish the CIA than to acquaint everyone and his brother with the most sensitive information and activities.

In short, we do not believe that the current spate of articles on the CIA, with inevitable leakage of valuable information, is in the national interest. They serve an appetite for sensational disclosures, but not the security of the United States.